



## 20 Most Often Asked Questions

1) **When is the park open?** The park is open every day, except December 25—weather and road conditions permitting.

2) **What are the park's hours?** From Labor Day to Memorial Day, the visitor center opens at 8:00 a.m. and closes at 5:00 p.m. The cave opens at 8:30 a.m., with the Natural Entrance closing at 2:00 p.m. and last elevator entry into the Big Room at 3:30 p.m. In the summer, the visitor center opens at 8:00 a.m. and closes at 7:00 p.m. The cave opens at 8:30 a.m. The Natural Entrance closes at 3:30 p.m. and last elevator entry into the Big Room at 5:00 p.m.

3) **How do we get to the park?** From the city of Carlsbad go south on US Highway 62/180 for about 20 miles. Turn right (west) at Whites City and go 7 miles to the visitor center. A general admission ticket is required for anyone that enters the cave. Tickets may be purchased at the visitor center information desk.

4) **How can we see the cave?** There are several ways to see Carlsbad Cavern, including via self- guided or ranger- guided tours. Your general admission ticket (\$6 adults, \$3 children 6- 15 years) allows access to two self- guided tours:

The **Natural Entrance Trail** is a steep 1¼- mile trail from the cave entrance to the Big Room. This one- hour tour is only recommended for those in good physical shape as it descends the equivalent of a 75- story building.

The **Big Room Trail** is accessed from either the elevator or the bottom of the Natural Entrance trail. The tour lasts 1 to 2 hours. You may take the short route (1 mile) or longer route (1.5 miles).

**Audio Guide:** On both self- guided tours, there are interpretive signs that provide basic cave information. For more in- depth information, rent an audio guide while purchasing your cave entry tickets. This easy- to- operate hand- held audio device can be used along both the Big Room and Natural Entrance trails.

5) **Are there any ranger- guided tours?** Yes, there are several ranger- guided tours available. Reservations are required for all ranger- guided tours. For reservations, call (800) 967- 2283. The easiest tour is the Kings Palace tour, which is on a paved trail with one steep hill. This tour is offered four times a day in the summer, and twice a day in the winter. Tickets for the Kings Palace tours are \$8 for adults and \$4 for children under 16; children must be at least 4 years of age.

The following guided tours range in difficulty from walking on rough dirt trails to crawling through cave passages. See the park newspaper, the website, or a ranger for more information. Tours are half price for children.

<u>Tour</u>	<u>Offered</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Age Limit</u>	<u>Length</u>
Left Hand Tunnel	Daily	9:00 a.m.	\$7	6	2 hrs
Lower Cave	M- F	1:00 p.m.	\$20	12	3 hrs
Slaughter Canyon Cave	Sat & Sun*	10:00a.m.*	\$15	6	2 hrs
Hall of the White Giant	Saturday	1 p.m.	\$20	12	4 hrs
Spider Cave	Sunday	1 p.m.	\$20	12	4 hrs

\*Offered daily in summer at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

6) **What can we do if we only have a few hours to spend in the park?** We recommend that you take the elevators from the visitor center and take the Big Room self- guided tour. Here you can spend between 30 minutes and 2 hours.

7) **Can we take food and drinks with us into the cave?** Food and drinks (except water) are not allowed on cave trails. Food and drink are only permitted in the underground lunchroom. A larger menu is available in the restaurant on the surface in the visitor center, and there are some picnic tables at the edge of the parking lot.

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- 8) What other items are not permitted in the cave?** Walking sticks, strollers and pets (except for service dogs) are not permitted. For a small fee, the kennel in the visitor center can board your pet while you visit the park. Please do not leave pets in your car, as serious injury or death may occur as a result of the extreme desert heat. There are a limited number of baby backpacks available on loan at the visitor center information desk.
- 9) Can we take pictures in the cave?** Yes, though remember that camera flashes will not light much of the cave.
- 10) What is it like in the cave?** Carlsbad Cavern is 56°F (13°C) year round, so a light jacket or long- sleeved shirt is recommended. The trails are electrically lit, but take a flashlight if you like. The cave is very humid, so be sure to bring your inhalant medication if you are prone to needing it under these conditions.
- 11) Does the park give senior discounts or AARP discounts?** The only senior discount is with the Golden Age Passport card. Other discounts apply with the National Park Pass, Golden Eagle Passport, and Golden Access Passport. These passes cover the general admission tickets only. Additional fees are required for guided tours. Ask at the information desk regarding these passes.
- 12) Is the cave wheelchair accessible?** Yes, part of the Big Room tour is wheelchair accessible. Ask about the wheelchair route and map at the visitor center information desk. You will find turn- around points on the trail to ensure you avoid steep areas. The park does not provide wheelchairs.
- 13) What facilities are in the cave?** Restrooms, water fountains and a snack bar are located in the underground lunchroom near the elevators. There are restrooms, water fountains, a book store, a restaurant and a gift shop in the visitor center on the surface.
- 14) Can we camp in the park?** There is no car/RV campground or overnight parking available in the park. Commercial campgrounds are available at Whites City and in the city of Carlsbad. Backcountry camping is by permit only. These permits are free and can be acquired at the visitor center information desk.
- 15) Can we see the bats year round?** Most of the bats migrate south for the winter where their insect prey is more abundant. There have been a few hundred bats staying through the winter, but it's not easy to see them, since the days are short. It is easiest to see them in mid- May through mid- October at an evening Bat Flight program at the Bat Flight Amphitheater. The amphitheater is near the park's visitor center at the natural entrance to Carlsbad Cavern. Flash photography is not permitted during the bat flight.
- 16) Are the bats safe?** Yes, the bats are safe. They do NOT attack people. Usually it is people who hurt the bats, through loss of habitat or pesticide use. Flash photography is not allowed during the evening bat flights because both the flash of light and the sound from the cameras affects the bats.
- 17) When was the cave found?** We are not sure when the cave was found. We know that American Indians and local residents had knowledge of the cave. We credit Jim White for being the first "explorer" of the cave in 1898.
- 18) How was the cave formed?** The cave was dissolved out of the limestone rock by sulfuric acid. Two hundred and fifty million years ago, an inland sea filled the Permian Basin. A reef formed along the edge, which was later uplifted thousands of feet above sea level. Hydrogen sulfide gas from local oil and gas deposits mixed with water percolating down from the surface to form sulfuric acid. This acid dissolved the limestone creating cave passageways, which were later filled with cave formations.
- 19) What are the formations called?** The larger ones hanging from the ceilings are stalactites and the ones growing up from the ground are stalagmites. Columns, draperies, soda straws and other formations can be found throughout the cave. These were formed when water from the surface moved through the ground and picked up carbon dioxide gas, creating carbonic acid. This weak acid dissolved the limestone, then redeposited the mineral calcite in the cave as formations.
- 20) Are there other caves in the area we could visit?** Carlsbad Cavern is the only commercial cave in the area with paved walkways, handrails and lights. The cave's Big Room is the largest cave chamber in North America, with no others comparable to its size. Guided tours are offered through Spider Cave and Slaughter Canyon Cave (see above table for tour information). Both have minimal development.